TODD J. STEIN HOLDS THE FINAL FIGHT FILM'S FIRST PRIVATE NEW YORK SCREENING AT VILLAGE EAST BY ANGELIKA

True-story short film draws audience at East Village theater, uniting cast and NY officials as a personal story becomes part of a push for guardianship reform.



Josh Davis with writer-director Todd J. Stein of The Final Fight

NEW YORK CITY, NY, UNITED STATES, September 9, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Final Fight, the new short film inspired by filmmaker Todd "TJ" Stein's real-life battle to protect his father from a court-appointed guardianship, held its first New York audience screening at Village East by Angelika in Manhattan, drawing a packed crowd for an emotional evening centered on family, justice and the growing movement for guardianship reform.

The private August 31 screening brought together the film's cast and crew, family, friends, advocates and New York City elected officials, followed by a discussion about guardianship and efforts to reform a system that can profoundly affect the rights and autonomy of vulnerable adults. For Stein, the project is deeply personal. In his introduction before the screening, Stein told the audience, "The Final Fight is the fight that you can't walk away from, the one where what you're fighting for matters more than whether you think you can win. For me, that fight was my father, Marvin Stein."

The screening also brought that personal story together with an ongoing public-policy debate over guardianship reform in New York. New York City Council Member Virginia Maloney attended the screening and spoke about Stein's determination to take an idea, turn it into a reality and use the resulting film to push a broader conversation about guardianship reform.

Also attending was Staten Island Council Member Frank Morano, who is spearheading bipartisan City Council legislation intended to establish a commission examining Article 81 guardianship services in New York City. The proposed commission would identify problems within the system,

examine best practices and develop recommendations for improving how guardianship services are provided and received. Morano praised the film following the screening, calling The Final Fight a “masterful piece of filmmaking” and “an incredible story that needs to be told.” The presence of elected officials actively engaged in guardianship reform underscored the intersection between the film’s deeply personal story and a larger effort to examine how the system operates.



Maggie Reed Portrays Phyllis Cohen, Inspired by Stein's own Mother Felicia Stein

The 18-minute film follows Scott Cohen, a Hollywood producer whose personal life is unraveling and whose career is in crisis as he returns to New York to rescue his aging father from a guardianship that has taken control of his life. He soon discovers that his professional power and connections cannot protect his father from a system he barely understands. Inspired by Stein’s own efforts to terminate the guardianship of his father, Marvin Stein, The Final Fight transforms an intensely personal father-son story into a dramatic examination of guardianship, autonomy and what happens when a family is forced to confront an institution with enormous power over another person’s life.

At its heart, The Final Fight is a story about a father and son. The real-life story that inspired the film was previously chronicled by New York Times journalist John Leland, whose reporting brought Marvin Stein’s guardianship ordeal and his son’s efforts to help him to a national audience. His article "The Fight Of This Old Boxer's Life Was With His Own Family, appeared on the cover of the 2022 Metropolitan section.

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> *Council Member, Frank Morano*

“One of the special things about the night was seeing our entire cast together,” Stein said. “When you make a film, actors can work on completely different days and never meet each other. This was the first time our entire cast was together, and they were finally able to see what we had all created.” For Stein, watching the completed film on a theater screen with an audience was particularly emotional. “It was our first time seeing it with an audience on the big screen, and it was quite an emotional experience,” he said. “I’m really proud of it.” The film’s official trailer was released just over a month ago and has already drawn significant attention, with nearly 90,000 views in its first four weeks. “The response to the trailer tells us the film is resonating with a wide audience,” Stein said. “People are connecting with the story, and there’s a real sense of anticipation for the film to find the right

platform and reach audiences."

The film stars Josh Davis as Scott Cohen, the son forced to confront both the guardianship system and his complicated relationship with his father. Davis' credits include Law & Order: SVU and Les Misérables. Tom Hair portrays Cohen's father, a character inspired by Marvin Stein. Hair said he was drawn to the project in part because of the significance of its message and the opportunity for the film to advance greater awareness of guardianship issues.



Todd J. Stein Attends Screening of The Final Fight at the Village East Angelika



The Final Fight Cast with Elected Officials Virginia Maloney and Tony Simone at the Village East Angelika Screening

Davis, who initially met Stein when a reading of the feature was presented to an audience earlier in the year was glad to take on the role. Actress Trini Alvarado, known for roles including Meg March in the 1994 film Little Women, portrays a fictionalized version of the journalist who helps expose what is happening to the family. Following the screening, Alvarado spoke about the impact of learning more about guardianship through the film, saying Stein was "trying to spread a very important message right now."

Most people never expect to encounter the guardianship system. But when a parent or other vulnerable family member becomes involved in a guardianship proceeding, families can suddenly find themselves navigating courts, attorneys, fiduciaries and decisions involving fundamental questions of independence, finances and personal autonomy. The Final Fight seeks to make those issues understandable not through statistics or legal arguments, but through the experience of one father and one son.

The screening represents the beginning of the film's next chapter as The Final Fight positions itself for the festival circuit and additional public and advocacy screenings. Stein also hopes the

short can ultimately provide the foundation for a feature film or television series that explores the story and the guardianship system on a larger canvas. Stein has largely self-funded the project, while also turning to crowdfunding through Seed&Spark to help offset production and related expenses. To support the film there is a campaign that can be found on the films website. The recently launched third campaign, this time focused on raising the funds necessary to support an ambitious festival run, including submission fees, travel, publicity, and other costs associated with bringing the film to audiences around the country.



Council Member Frank Morano speaks at The Final Fight Screening

The goal is to compete for selection at top-tier festivals including Sundance, SXSW, the Tribeca Festival, and the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF). Stein and the film's producer, Marlene Schneider, are also targeting a broader group of prestigious festivals known for showcasing short films, including the Atlanta Film Festival, Palm Springs International ShortFest, HollyShorts Film Festival, LA Shorts International Film Festival, Austin Film Festival, Nashville Film Festival, and deadCenter Film Festival, among others.

But beneath the legal battle, political discussion and campaign for reform, Stein says the movie remains something much simpler: a story about a son showing up for his father. "He'd be so proud of me," Stein said of Marvin Stein. "It's his legacy."

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